

Message Text

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DEPT PLEASE PASS USMISSION NATO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJ: FOREIGN MINISTER ON CURRENT POLITICAL CRISIS

REFS: (A) STATE 170880, (B) STATE 170871 NOTAL

1. PURSUANT INSTRUCTIONS IN REF A, I CALLED ON FONMIN MELO ANTUNES AT 12:30 HOURS JULY 22. TOLD HIM I HAD SENSITIVE MATTER TO DISCUSS, AND HE MIGHT NOT WISH TO REPLY DIRECTLY, PARTICULARLY SINCE WE WERE IN HIS OFFICE (WHICH MAY WELL BE TAPPED).

2. TOLD HIM I HAD NO INTENTION OF INTERFERING IN INTERNAL AFFAIRS, BUT THAT MY PERSONAL OBSERVATION OF RECENT DETERIORATION IN PORTUGUESE SITUATION LED ME TO BELIEVE THAT IT COULD EVENTUALLY HAVE A SERIOUS IMPACT ON NATO AND US SECURITY NETWORK. AS HE WAS AWARE FROM HIS CONVERSATIONS AT BRUSSELS WE WERE NOT INTERESTED IN INTERFERING WITH PORTUGUESE MARCH TOWARD SOCIALISM, WHATEVER AFM MIGHT MEAN BY THAT, BUT WE WERE CONCERNED ABOUT COMMUNIST INFILTRATION IN A COUNTRY WHICH IS A MEMBER OF A DEFENSIVE ANTI-COMMUNIST ALLIANCE. I HAD THEREFORE REPORTED TO SECRETARY KISSINGER THAT, IN MY JUDGMENT, PORTUGAL WAS IN ITS MOST SERIOUS CRISIS SINCE THE REVOLUTION. THE SECRETARY HAD REPLIED ASKING ME TO MAKE SEVERAL POINTS TO MELO ANTUNUES. THESE FOLLOW:

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3. BOTH IN MY JUDGMENT AND IN THE JUDGMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT

NOW WAS THE TIME TO ACT. IF MODERATES DID ACT TO REDUCE INFLUENCE OF COMMUNIST ELEMENTS THEY WOULD HAVE OUR SUPPORT. THERE ARE WAYS THAT WE COULD DEMONSTRATE THIS, SUCH AS ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE.

4. ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN CONTINUED DETERIORATION OF PORTUGUESE POLITICAL SITUATION IN FAVOR OF RADICAL ELEMENTS WILL MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR US TO GET SUPPORT FROM PUBLIC AND CONGRESS FOR FURTHER AMERICAN ASSISTANCE. I ALSO TOLD MELO ANTUNES IN CONFIDENCE THAT WE HAD DISCUSSED PORTUGUESE SITUATION WITH SOVIETS BASED ON CHANGED TONE IN PRAVADA AND IYVESTIA ARTICLES. ANTUNES SEEMED FAMILIAR WITH THESE ARTICLES. HE ALSO INDICATED HIS APPRECIATION OF PROBLEMS WITH PUBLIC AND CONGRESS.

5. AFTER LISTENING TO ME CAREFULLY ANTUNES, WHO IS NORMALLY QUITE RESERVED IN CONVERSATIONS WITH FOREIGNERS, ASKED IF I WOULD LIKE A CUP OF COFFEE AND PROCEEDED TO SPEAK HIS MIND. HE BEGAN BY NOTING MY FAMILIARITY WITH SITUATION AND "I THEREFORE DON'T NEED TO TELL YOU WHAT MY POSITION HAS BEEN."
(FYI ANTUNES AND CATO E CASTRO HAVE BEEN THE TWO LEADERS IN THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL IN THE ATTEMPT TO OUST VASCO CONCALVES.)
WHAT I CAN TELL YOU IS THAT WE HAVE NOT GIVEN UP. WE RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CRISIS AND INTEND TO FIGHT TO THE END.

6. THE SECOND POINT HE SAID HE WISHED TO MAKE WAS THAT THE COMMUNISTS WERE BETTER EQUIPPED TECHNICALLY THAN THE "MODERATES," (A PHRASE HE SAID HE USED FOR "WANT OF A BETTER TERM"). BY THIS HE MEANT THAT THE PCP'S ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND THEIR DISCIPLINE ALLOWED THEM TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MANY OF THE MILITARY FIGURES WHO DID NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND THE RAMIFICATIONS OF THE PRESENT SITUATION.

7. THE THIRD POINT WAS THAT HE, MELO ANTUNES, HAD MADE AN EFFORT EVEN BEFORE BECOMING FOREIGN MINISTER TO ELICIT GREATER TANGIBLE SUPPORT FROM THE EUROPEANS. DESPITE LEFTWARD DRIFT IN PORTUGAL HE FELT THAT EUROPEAN AID CONTINUED TO BE A VALUABLE TOOL FOR THE MODERATES. HE LAMENTED THAT AID FROM EUROPE AND THE U.S. HAD NOT COME QUICKLY ENOUGH. NOW, HE NOTED, EUROPE AND THE U.S. WILL HAVE TO INVEST MORE TO SAVE PORTUGAL THAN THEY MIGHT HAVE
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HAD THEY MOVED AT AN EARLIER DATE.

8. MELO ANTUNES SAID HE AGREED WITH ME THAT SITUATION WAS THE MOST SERIOUS SINCE THE REVOLUTION. THE NEXT TWENTY DAYS OR SO WOULD DETERMINE WHETHER PORTUGAL BECOMES A COMMUNIST OR PRO-COMMUNIST DICTATORSHIP OR WHETHER IT OPS FOR A DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM. HE ALSO AGREED WHEN I NOTED THAT THE COMMUNISTS DON'T EVEN UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPTS OF DEMOCRACY AND INDIVIDUAL

LIBERTY. HE ASSURED ME THAT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES "WHO ARE NOT INCONSIDERABLE IN NUMBER" ARE PREPARED TO FIGHT HARD FOR A PLURALIST DEMOCRACY. THE RAMIFICATIONS OF THE PRESENT STRUGGLE IN PORTUGAL WERE SO GREAT, HE SAID, THAT THEY COULD EVEN EFFECT CSCE.

9. I TOLD HIM ABOUT MY INDIRECT CONTACTS WITH COSTA GOMES THROUGH FERREIRA DA CUNHA AND CALDAS. SAID I HAD WARNED COSTA GOMES THAT IF HE DID NOT ACT I PERSONALLY THOUGHT HIS POSITION WAS IN DANGER. HE DID NOT RESPOND DIRECTLY, EXCEPT TO SUGGEST THAT THE UNITED STATES NOT TAKE ANY OVERT ACTION RIGHT NOW AT THE HEAT OF THE CRISIS. "GIVE US 20 DAYS, NO, A MONTH, AND YOU WILL KNOW IF WE HAVE SUCCEEDED," HE SAID. IF MODERATES DO SUCCEED THE U.S. AND ITS ALLIES SHOULD THEN BE PREPARED TO COME IN WITH VERY SUBSTANTIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. THE MODERATES WILL NEED IT IF THEY ARE TO HAVE A CHANCE OF SAVING PORTUGAL FROM THE COMMUNISTS.

10. COMMENT: WHILE SOME PORTUGUESE MODERATE LEADERS ARE BECOMING DISCOURAGED, PARTICULARLY OVER COSTA GOMES INDECISIVENESS, MELO ANTUNES OBVIOUSLY HAS A LOT OF FIGHT LEFT IN HIM. HE IS WELL RESPECTED IN AFM AND MODERATE PARTY CIRCLES BOTH FOR HIS INTELLECTUAL ABILITY AND HIS REVOLUTIONARY CREDENTIALS. HE PROBABLY HAS AS GOOD A CHANCE OF OUSTING VASCO GONCALVES AS ANYBODY, ALTHOUGH THAT WILL NOT BE AN EASY TASK.

11. MELO ANTUNUES CLEARLY APPRECIATED OUR APPROACH AND THE FACT THAT WE TOOK HIM INTO OUR CONFIDENCE.
CARLUCCI

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